

Y.W.C.A.

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INTIMATE GLIMPSES

of

Y. W. C. A. WORK

CHINA

SYRIA

AUSTRALIA

ARGENTINA

MALAYA

GREAT BRITAIN

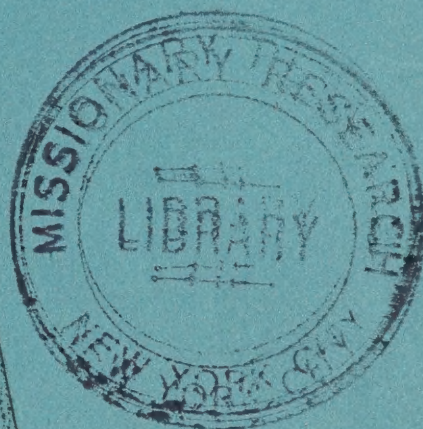
INDIA

PALESTINE

PHILIPPINES

BRAZIL

CHILE



"KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING "

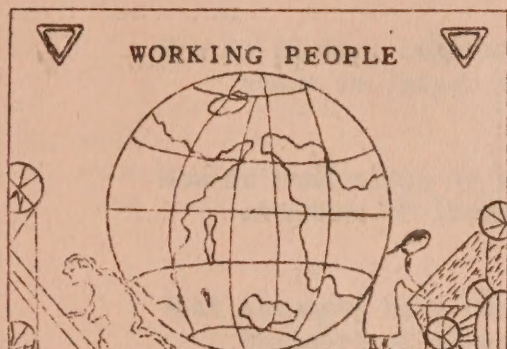
DOMESTIC PROBLEMS IN A WORLD SETTING

The following pages contain true stories of incidents in Y.W.C.A.'s around the world. They testify that in other countries than our own the Association is part and parcel of the life which surrounds it. Some of the stories are ones which might occur in cities and towns in the United States, and all of them illustrate that our problems have their counterparts in other countries. The Foreign Division has chosen these excerpts from letters and reports, hoping that they will not only give our world movement reality for clubs and individuals in this country, but also enrich our own programs. From all over the globe come requests for program ideas and methods of work in the United States. The Business Girls' Nation-wide Observance material, for instance, is put to work in Northern Australia, India, Holland, Chile, and many other places, and we know from this that the questions we are asking cannot be answered by us alone. They seem to be domestic problems, but when we find them appearing thousands of miles away we see that they are of world importance, and only an international solution will be adequate to resolve them.

Our "true stories" from ten countries, therefore, are accompanied by questions relating them to Association life in this country. As a club or committee touches upon any one of these problems, it may be helpful to pose these or similar questions in order to give perspective to the discussion or presentation. The groups to whom the questions are directed here are merely indicative of the way in which any group in the Association might use this material. More of such incidents may be obtained by writing to the Foreign Division, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

Katherine H. Barbour

THE Y AND THE WORKER - I



The weary girl from the factory dropped with a relieved sigh into the chair the secretary offered.

"Through work?"

"Until six."

Until six in the morning she would be free - to sleep until she must resume her place in the factory.

"Can't you rest here?"

"No, I must go - I came only to say I'd found a room." The girl's face had been dim with weariness, but now it glowed with enthusiasm.

"A room?"

"For the school . . . for the Y classes. The new girls need so much to come, and now we've got a room."

Beleaguered from without, straining every resource to meet the demands of almost impossibly difficult situations, Chinese industrial girls are profoundly convinced of the value and importance of the program of their Association at this critical time. The incident related above is only one of many evidences of the constructive work which the Y.W.C.A. is continuing to carry on in the chaos of conflict.

"It became a question," the Chinese delegate said, "whether we should forfeit the good will of one of our largest contributors or support the girls who were his employees in their plea for better conditions." The Chinese Association of which she spoke lost a large contribution to its budget by the decision it finally made, but many, many more factory girls can now join the Y.W.C.A. group in saying - with real meaning - "Our Father."

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How do factory conditions in your town or state compare with those in China, and in other countries in the world?

How do conditions of work in other countries affect the standard of living of workers in the United States?

What attempts have been made to establish an international standard of wages, hours, factory inspection, etc.?

These are questions which could be discussed not only by industrial clubs, but also by public affairs committees, and with business girls, or students.

A membership committee, board of directors, or local committee on budget might use the second story from China to ask themselves:

Is our Association a true fellowship?

To what extent is our Association program controlled by our need for funds?

Is our program touching the needs of all groups in the community? How? How not?

THE Y AND THE WORKER - II

"I will pay. I will join the Y.W.C.A."

The Y.W.C.A. secretary in Syria looked in amazement at her visitor, a laboring man who had, he said, walked six miles to the city headquarters to find the truth of a strange story he had heard from factory girls where he worked.

"I told them nobody cared about the working people," he confessed. "I didn't believe you women cared. But I will pay. I will be a member of the Y.W.C.A.!"

Its program for girls working in factories is one of the strongest features of the Y.W.C.A. in Syria. Education, nutrition, and other services are rendered by "these women" to whom the laboring man in the true incident related above paid tribute.

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For the membership committee or the board of directors:

Because of our program, who would care to join the Y.W.C.A.?

How many people in the community know about our purpose and activities?

How are we demonstrating that "we care" about the condition of people in our town?

THE Y AND THE WORKER - III

Adventures and problems of a pioneering Y.W.C.A. in the coal-field area of Australia are recounted in a recent number of "Association News." People in these communities live under a never-lifting cloud of insecurity which darkens their whole lives. Housing conditions are very poor, though the Y.W.C.A. secretary speaks of the valiant efforts of the women to preserve cleanliness in their homes.

In twelve years, five Y.W.C.A. centers have been established in the coal fields. The progress of those years has been marked by the tragicomic situations which always seem to strew the path of pioneers blessed with a sense of humor. Getting breakfast for a group of guests with "one electric jug" as the sole piece of equipment - using the back rooms of a local motion-picture theatre as a headquarters - renting an unused garage when the theatre burned down - these crises were safely survived, and the erstwhile garage is now transformed into an attractive clubroom.

In a talk to a Senior Conference, the news item tells us, the Y.W.C.A. secretary from the coal-field area "spoke of the recent coal strike and its effect upon the lives of the people." It is not hard to imagine the situation behind those words - nor the significance of the contribution which the "fellowship of women and girls" in the Australian Y.W.C.A. is making in the lives of the people of the coal fields.

* * * * *

For any club or public affairs committee:

Where do we find security in these days?

What effect do housing, health, and employment have upon our attitudes toward our friends and other people in the community, and upon our own approach to personal or public problems?

What groups in our city or town are working to alleviate the insecurity of people?

Is our Association equipped to deal with the most pressing problems of the community? How are we doing it?

Nationally, how can the Y.W.C.A. serve people in the coal fields, on the farms, the migrant workers, the unemployed, etc.? How can our community Association strengthen these efforts?

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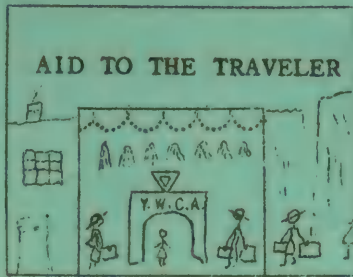
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"Released to the custody of the Y.W.C.A." has a severe sound, but in ensuring the protection and well-being of travelers it is a phrase of comfort and reassurance. The travelers' aid department of the Buenos Aires Association has many interesting pages in its history, each of which has a story to tell of some bewildered, lonely girl rescued from the confusion of strange and complicated immigration laws, and safely started in her new life.

A Swiss girl attempting to reach Paraguay, but without funds to continue her journey there - the English fiancée of a resident of Argentina whose home was in the interior - two frightened Jewish girls from Austria who pleaded with the Association for help in making a new start - these are some of the human stories behind the "custody of Y.W.C.A." In the case of the Swiss girl, the Association was able to secure the assistance of some Swiss priests who accompanied her safely to her destination where she was met by her fiancé. The young Englishwoman completed her wedding plans while remaining in the charge of the Y.W.C.A., and when her fiancé's papers were in order, the wedding was solemnized with the blessing of her foster-parent - the Y.W.C.A.!

Thus in Buenos Aires - and half-way round the world, Singapore and Penang Associations add their share of assistance to the lonely or distressed traveler. As a port city, Singapore receives many immigrants and visitors to whom the Y.W.C.A. is an unfailing source of assistance. In Penang a small restaurant, operated by the Y.W.C.A., is located near the piers and is used as an information bureau for travelers.

Twenty-three Scottish girls, coming to an English city in search of seasonal employment, were greeted by a fog of the thickest pea-soup variety, which prevented their reaching their destination. Next day the papers carried a story of how the Y.W.C.A., having no hostel, nevertheless welcomed these wayfarers and provided a hot meal of bacon and eggs as well as "beds" on chairs and settees in the lounge!

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For the residence club, the central registration secretary or committee, the general secretary and the board of directors:

Are there any strangers passing through our town taken care of by other organizations?

Does the Y.W.C.A. offer its services to such agencies?

How are we helping people from other countries to find their place in American life?

What "emergencies" have we adjusted to in the past year?

Have we ever refused to help travelers or groups because our regular program didn't offer them anything? How flexible are we?

THE Y AND INDIA'S HOUSING NEED

How the Y.W.C.A. of Madras, India, helped to improve the conditions of slum dwellers in that vicinity is told in the monthly news sheet from India.

"For quite a long time the two cheris lying within half a mile of the Y.W.C.A. had pricked our attention, and finally spurred us into action. During the monsoon, when the rain poured from our roofs and flooded the gutters and roadsides, we wondered whether the flimsy huts were proving adequate protection.

"One Sunday morning a member of the Association staff and two Hostel residents penetrated the first of these settlements. We were met by a sluggish dirty stream of water that skirted a tumbled-down shed which held two buffaloes. The people were curious but willing to give information. The huts were low and dark and irregularly built. A money-lender was seen leaving the huts and we found that most of the families were in his debt. In several houses tiny children and babies played alone in the semi-dark, while both parents worked on the roads. Directly under our feet, in the main path, lay an unwashed, screaming baby, obviously suffering from summer diarrhoea. It was no one's business to care for the child, and the small boy of three years who watched it was in nearly as sorry a plight. 'They are bad children - they steal food,' we were told.

"From this first cheri we went to the other and found conditions there even worse. The settlement was of many years standing We telephoned the Red Cross Office to see whether any existing organization could arrange to visit the homes and do something for the neglected children. We found that nobody had the means to this. We then begged the services of a trained Red Cross visitor, and the week following our preliminary visit four of us set out to make a survey in the nearer cheri We collected information regarding the number of inhabitants in each hut, the disposal of rubbish and manure, lavatory and bathing facilities, water supply, lighting, and general knowledge concerning the health and school attendance of the children. Our visit revealed another issue. The occupants had received a notice from their landlord to quit the ground. There was a long-standing feud between the land-owner and the hut-owners. They regarded occupancy over a long period as the right to remain, while the owner disputed this. There was no other land available to which the people could go, nor could they pay for the building of new huts. They mostly paid their rent for the right to squat. . . .

"We reported to the Public Health Officer and conducted him through the cheri. He also visited the owner of the land, who said he would make some improvements. We wrote to the Commissioner of Labour and asked that he try to make available other vacant ground, and in the meanwhile the people were granted an extension in which they might try to find other places to live. As a result of our approach to the Corporation Commissioner the cheri was placed on the list of twelve cheris on which action was to be taken within the year."

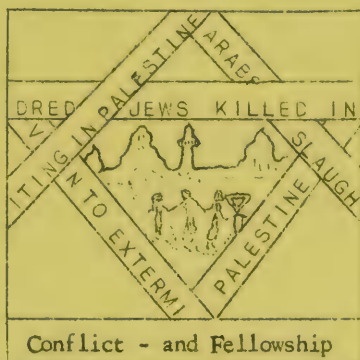
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As members of the Y.W.C.A., what is our responsibility for bad housing conditions in our community? For other social issues?

If the situation described in this story about India were found in your city, how would you have dealt with it? Is there anything in your town comparable to this? What are its causes? What makes people live there? What effect do their surroundings have upon the adults and children in the slum area?

These are philosophical as well as practical questions. The religious education, public affairs, and program planning committees might ask themselves what place social services of this nature have in our program. Is India unique?

A TRANSCENDING FELLOWSHIP IN A "TROUBLE-SPOT" - PALESTINE



"During 1936 the wife of a Government official joined the Y.W.C.A. in Jerusalem because she said that it was the only Association that had carried on consistently through the riots and strike that year. Not long ago a similar incident occurred. An ardent Zionist woman came into the office to inquire about membership because she had been so impressed by the spirit shown at an Association event in which Arab, Armenian, British, German, Greek, and Jewish members had taken part. The whole program had been planned, stewarded, and carried through most successfully by a committee of mixed na-

tionalities, and all who had taken part had thoroughly enjoyed themselves. 'In these days,' a secretary commented, 'when some sections of the community are afraid to be seen in another part of the town, and when there is such bitter feeling between races, we have much to be thankful for, that such a mixed group has met, week after week, to plan and practice, and was able to bring their friends to share their enjoyment.'"

Concerning the work of the Y.W.C.A. in the troubled area of Palestine, an Association secretary wrote from Jerusalem to headquarters in Great Britain: "The biggest service which the Association can perform and is performing is by quietly carrying on its work, not being set back by forced changes of plans - refusing to be shaken by disruptive forces - but bringing people together for those things which they can still enjoy with one another."

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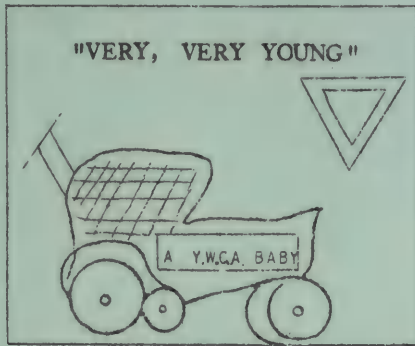
For any club or committee discussion of international affairs:

What creates antagonism or understanding between different nationalities, races, or religions?

How does it happen that, as in Palestine, different groups are able to work together while their leaders foment discord and strife? How much is propaganda, ignorance, or greed responsible for civil or international strife?

How can the Y.W.C.A. in your community, or on your campus, guard against attempts to arouse hostility between groups, or dissolve those already in existence?

THE VERY VERY YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION



It all began with the membership and finance campaign. Even the alert Association in the Philippines had rarely seen anything like it. The business girls reported over 500 pesos, the Senoras gym class were hostesses at a tea on "Members Day," the "Y.W.C.A. Highway Chart" on the wall grew brighter and brighter as each success entitled the workers to paint a little more of the roadway in silver. The Girl Reserves, spurred on by the offer of an older member to match their contributions, reported well over 500 pesos. And from their

strenuous efforts grew the new membership plan.

As Junior Members, the Girl Reserves wondered why there should not also be "very Junior Members" from five to nine years of age, and - why not "very very Junior Members" from one day to five years! The plan was given impetus when a godmother gave her wee goddaughter a membership and a young lady of six months became the first "very very Junior Member."

Youth and enthusiasm live in every bit of news from the Association in the Philippines. New plans - high hopes for new developments in student work under Miss Eunice Adams, advisory secretary from the United States who only recently took up her duties in the Philippines - plans for opening new clubs in the provinces - expansion of the program for factory girls - these and many other instances prove the vitality of this "very" Young Women's Christian Association.

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For the membership committee:

How is the Association helping to meet the needs of the very young members of our city or town?

What other groups are serving them?

What advantages are there in starting to work with the very young children?

What attitudes and habits of life are our schools giving children?
Can we be of help in improving them if they need it?

How have conditions in our community changed since our program was established? Have our services changed to meet the needs of the times? What are we giving to our members in addition to sociability?

QUESTION-MARK TO THE RESCUE:

The Question Mark? She's the "Press Pussy" of the Philippine Y.W.C.A. In her latest appearance on a neatly mimeographed blue news-sheet, the Question Mark was celebrating the Manila Y.W.C.A.'s adventure into a new field of service, being the proud possessors of a new center on the north side of the city, which will be used as a dormitory for young women studying in schools in that section of Manila and a club and recreation center for Girl Reserve clubs, and for a group of sixty girls from the nearby factory.

The Question Mark is hard at work to secure furniture, draperies, and pictures to make the new center attractive. "The Girl Reserves," she says, "are hoping that this new Blue Triangle Center may make one of their dreams come true. For a long time they have wanted an Arts and Crafts Workshop where they can pound, paint, and saw - and make things. In the new building there is a corner where such a shop would fit in beautifully. So now they are looking for a fairy godmother with a magic wand who will help them create it."

In the Downtown Center for Business Girls in Manila, a noon program is arranged for girls who, not being able to go home for lunch, wish to spend an hour of rest and recreation. Besides the lunch room and the rest room there is a reading room and classroom where occasional short courses are given. A free medical examination is provided once a year for those wishing it. Girls who use the center are clerks, stenographers, sales girls, telephone operators, etc. Those who are able pay fifty cents a month. Almost all the girls are helping to support from two to five persons in their families.

An employment office at the center gives vocational guidance as well as placement service. No fee is charged.

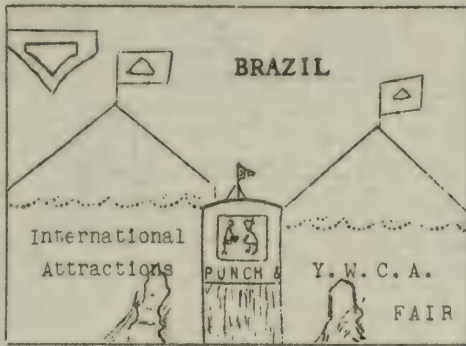
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To the residence committee, the committee on building management, and the membership committee:

What relationships has your Association discovered between adequate quarters and adequate program? How does your building contribute to making your Association an inclusive fellowship? What flaws in your total program can be traced directly to inadequate housing of the Association?

A discussion between a member of your Association and a "Y.W.C.A. member in the Philippines" on the questions listed above would make an interesting bit of program at a membership meeting.

TROPICAL FIESTA - BRAZIL



"Heigh-ho, come to the Fair!"

Little Red Riding Hood, the Three Little Pigs, and other famous personages in nursery fairy lore appeared on the walls in gay mural patterns, beckoning all and sundry to come to the marionette theater. The tropic seas furnished the motif for other sections of the Fair: in the tea and supper rooms the waitresses wore girdles of fishnet and starfish ornaments gleamed in their hair.

"The most thrilling thing about it," wrote Mary Jane Corbett, American secretary in Brazil, "was the release which came to a group of artistic souls who never use their abilities to the full The decoration committee was headed by a charming girl who has studied applied art but is a lady of leisure and with few outlets to use her artistic ability. She assembled a group of ten people, four or five of whom were genuine artists like herself. One woman who is a housewife and finds housekeeping very dull was not a Y member, but after working hours every day for weeks on these decorations, she announced, 'I have had such a marvellous time painting that I feel I must at last join the Y to show my gratitude.' And she did!"

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To interclub councils and department committees:

How are we freeing the creative ability of our members?

What is the importance of giving our members an opportunity to express a creative urge? What is the relation of this to social attitudes and actions?

For public affairs committees:

What creative ability do various nations possess? In building a world community of nations, what stress should be placed upon the free development of the talents and resources of each nation? What interferes with this now? What attempts have been made to make this possible?

UPHEAVAL

The entire world was moved to sympathy by news of the earthquake which, early in 1939, ravaged the coastal cities of Chile. Expressions of concern and financial assistance came from all over the world to the welfare agencies struggling to ameliorate the tragic effects of the disaster.

For some Chilean women, the tragedy recalled another earthquake catastrophe, in 1906, whose upsetting effects were social as well as physical. Miss Dora Martin, president of the Y.W.C.A. at Valparaiso, writes in the British Y.W.C.A.'s News for Citizens:

"Before 1906, most of the Chilean women had to live in retirement, working hard at home, making their own clothes, or attending to their households, which used to be run on patriarchal scale. Three generations used to live together in the roomy old Spanish houses, where there were three courtyards with shady gardens where young and old could sit out of doors. Only women who had taken up teaching as a profession were wage-earners. Some skilled embroiderers sold their exquisite work, but this was done in a secretive fashion, as it was supposed to be the duty of the men of the family to keep all the aunts, sisters and cousins. But the earthquake brought ruin in its wake, the necessities of life were doubled and trebled in price, so women had to bestir themselves."

Today the effects of more than twenty years of change are evident in the position of women in Chile. Miss Martin adds:

"The first South American women to take university degrees were two Chileans who are still living, having won universal admiration as excellent doctors. Some women became lawyers: of late the numbers of women who are called to the bar have made many of the men fear that they will have to abandon the field to the gentler sex. Dentistry is a favourite pursuit among women. It is also a very paying one, as the teeth of the population are not good, owing to the lack of lime in the water and the wrong feeding of children. Pharmacists are also much in demand, as women are found more conscientious than men in the making up of prescriptions."

The following glimpses of Chilean women, furnished by Miss Martin, afford insight into many problems which we in the United States share with the women and girls of Chile:

"Take a Letter": Business secretaries must master two or three foreign languages if they are to be well paid. A girl who speaks, writes, and takes shorthand notes in Spanish only, will receive about \$20 salary a month. If she adds English, German, and French, she will receive about \$80 monthly. (The Y.W.C.A. in Chile numbers over 200 business girls among its members. Shorthand, typing and language classes are conducted at the Association.)

Factory, Shop and Home: Shopgirls also receive low wages and often work long hours, being kept at work until nearly midnight. They receive two weeks holiday each year. Factory workers are increasing in number, and tobacco factories, artificial silk mills, and china works employ almost as many women as men.

Women Teachers: Lately the salaries of this group have been raised. Secondary school teachers, who are paid by the hour, draw large salaries. Many teachers use a part of their salaries to feed and clothe children of destitute families.

- And the Ballot-Box? Women do not as yet have the vote except in municipal elections, in which women over twenty-five can vote. Some years ago a Chilean city elected a woman mayor, who remained in office several years and left an enviable record. There have been several women on municipal boards.

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For public affairs, membership groups and committees, students:

What problems do industrial and business girls in your Association share with stenographers, factory workers, and shop salesgirls in Chile? Have we made progress on the problems they face? Is international understanding easier or more difficult for them than for us?

Have you read any reports of the Lima Conference? Some of these afford interesting light, not only on our relationships with Latin American countries, but on the position of women in the conference and in Latin America. (The Woman's Press for February 1939 carries an interesting and informative article on the Lima conference.)

Are you familiar with the materials of the Pan-American Union? Programs, plays, and information on pan-American relationships are available there (address at Washington, D.C.).

What is the Y.W.C.A. doing in the field of

- (1) better inter-American relationships?
- (2) problems of business and industrial women in Chile and other South American countries?
- (3) the position of women in these countries?

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